



No. 4212.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1846.



THE removal of Lord Lincoln from the office of Chief Commissioner of Woods and Works, together with the more than ordinary degree of excitement prevailing in the political circle, will probably have the effect of postponing for a time the revision of the Buildings Act. In the meanwhile, the public do not cease to call for this revision: the parishioners of St. Mary Abbot, Kensington, are summoned to meet in vestry on Monday morning next, to consider what steps should be taken with the view of immediately obtaining it; and other parishes, it is said, contemplate holding similar meetings for the same purpose. From letters that we have received, it would seem that our correspondent of February 7th (p. 61). "A District Surveyor," put into words the feeling of a large number of persons when he said, there is one defect "pervading the whole measure, which appears to me a primary cause of the failure, viz., an unnecessary interference with private rights beyond what is really necessary to protect the public; protection to the public being in my mind a sufficient, but the only reason upon which such an Act can be justified, and the only basis upon which its provisions should be founded." We trust that the parties to whom the revision of the Act may be committed will proceed with a full appreciation of this principle; we should then have little fear of the result.

Pending the desired alteration, the immediate appointment of an official referee in the place of Mr. Higgins, who now no longer acts, is indispensably necessary. The position which the excellent registrar is compelled by the Act to take, in the absence of a second referee, has proved distasteful to the building public, who desire, on applying to the referees, to submit themselves to the decision of practical men, and to have as little law as possible. A strong statement on the subject has been submitted to us by an able and accomplished architect; but we do not think it desirable to insert it, at all events at this moment. We have great respect for the gentleman now holding the appointment, and should feel a delicacy in referring to any subject calculated to annoy him; in the present instance, however, we are satisfied this cannot be the case, as we know that he would gladly resign his forced office of referee, and confine himself exclusively to the office he fills so well—that of registrar.

We take this opportunity to mention that the Buildings' Office will be removed in the present week from Trafalgar-square to No. 6, Adelphi-terrace.

The following are the heads of some recent awards:—

CUTTING INTO GRIMMEVE.

Mr. B. Davis desired to remove the chimney-breast situated in the party-wall on the ground-floor of a house in Fowle-street, Woolwich, and to carry the breast in the upper floor on a York landing, supported by two iron columns.

The district-surveyor objected under schedule F.

The award was, "that inasmuch as we have reported our opinion to the Commissioners of Works and Buildings, that a modification of the rules of the Metropolitan Buildings Act to the effect stated in the said requisition, ought to be made, we are of opinion that the surveyor of the district will be justified in permitting the work to be done as stated in the said requisition, and as shown in the drawings thereto annexed, so that the same be done in conformity with all the other rules and regulations of the Metropolitan Buildings Act, and to the satisfaction of the surveyor of the district."

RENEWAL OF WOODEN PROJECTIONS.

Mr. Hill of Lewisham, having renewed a wooden eaves-gutter in front of an employer's house, and secondly in respect of "the wood covering of shop front pediment,—about 3 feet in length at one end thereof, having been stripped and renewed with similar materials; the district surveyor, Mr. Badger, gave him notice of irregularity. The referees' award was that, "Inasmuch as the renewal of wooden eaves-cornices is contrary to the said Act, we the said official referees do hereby determine and award, that the eaves-cornice in question in so far as it is of wood, must be taken away, and if such cornice be restored, it must be formed and made of unisumammable materials, or the present eaves-cornice must be covered with some proper and sufficient incombustible material, under the superintendence of the surveyor of the district, and with regard to the repair of the wood covering of the shop-front, seeing that the same is only about 3 feet in length, and a small addition to an old covering used for the purpose of trade, and being of the nature of a cornice to a shop-front, we the said official referees do further award, that such covering may remain."

Costs of office 17. 11s. 6d., and 10s. 6d. to the district surveyor, to be paid by Hill.

PARTY-WALLS.

Mr. Gosling, of Edward-street, Woolwich, applied to be allowed to use a party-wall 8½ inches thick (which was built under the Act to a fourth-rate building, three stories high), for a third-rate building of the same height as the fourth-rate, viz., three stories, consisting of cellars, ground and one-pair floors; Mr. Gosling, finding that the wall was not thick enough, began an external wall 14 inches, or 1½ brick thick against the 9-inch party wall, but as it cut up his space, and was much more expensive than he contemplated, he was induced to make the application. The district surveyor, Mr. Aitchison, was of opinion that as his building was to be precisely of the same height as the other, and merely differed in being of rather larger area, that a 9-inch wall would be as efficient for all practical purposes as it would be between two fourth-rate buildings.

The referees said—"we are not authorized to relax the rules of the Metropolitan Buildings Act in respect of party-walls as it regards their thicknesses in such cases, and if the said William Gosling desires to build a house against the party-wall in question, he must build a fourth-rate house, or must take down and rebuild the said party-wall of the thicknesses required by the said Act for the rate of the house which he proposes to build, or must build an external wall of the thicknesses required by the said Act for the rate of the house which he proposes to build against the said existing party-wall."

MR. GALLY KNIGHT, M.P.

THE death of Mr. Henry Gally Knight, which occurred on the 9th inst., at his house in Lower Grosvenor-street, will be deplored as well by all who are interested in architectural literature, as by those who enjoyed the gratification of being acquainted with him. He was in his fifty-ninth year, and has sat in Parliament since 1831. Mr. Knight's literary taste exhibited itself in the first instance in a series of poetical tales, illustrative of the countries through which he had travelled immediately after leaving Cambridge, and where he had renewed an acquaintance with Lord Byron. These failed to obtain for him any great reputation as a poet, and after the publication of a dramatic poem called "Hannibal in Bithynia," he appears to have deserted the muses, and to have devoted his leisure to the investigation of architectural history at home and abroad.

Startled by the early dates ascribed by the Norman Society of Antiquaries to certain churches in the pointed style, he landed at Dieppe in May, 1831, examined the buildings and the libraries throughout the country, and on his return published "An Architectural Tour in Normandy," which conclusively destroyed the assertions of the French antiquaries. Speaking of the want of precise evidence as to the date of existing buildings, or of the particular portions of those buildings upon which the solution of antiquarian problems frequently depends, he said wisely,—"The best evidence is contained in the buildings themselves,—the evidence of construction and style. This evidence is a fact, and a fact of more weight than bushels of inferences, conjectures and opinions. Against the evidence of style, the evidence of science (often much insisted upon) is of no avail, for unrecorded ruin is, in any instance, much more probable than the real existence of an unprecedented anomaly."

At the conclusion of the Tour are two valuable essays, one on Norman architecture in Normandy, the other on Norman architecture in England.

Having thus reviewed the works of the Normans in these two countries, he was desirous of completing the survey "by giving some account of their operations in the third scene of their conquest and dominion, Sicily;" and accordingly started for Messina in August, 1836, and in 1838, published a sequel to the Tour, under the title of "The Normans in Sicily." This is prefaced with an historical notice of the events which led to the establishment of the Normans in the south of Europe. His third, last, and best work is called "Ecclesiastical Architecture of Italy, from the time of Constantine to the fifteenth century," splendidly illustrated by Mr. Owen Jones.

In each of the former cases he had engaged a professional architect to assist him; Mr. Richard Hussey in the first instance, and Mr. George Moore (whose present sad state we mentioned last week) in the second; and appears to have spared no trouble and expense in obtaining correct data. We have great satisfaction in recording, that nearly his last act was one of benevolent liberality. Mr. Wyatt, the architect, having attended him a very short time ago, on the subject of poor Moore, Mr. Knight immediately wrote a check for fifty pounds, and presented it as his contribution to the fund it is desired to raise.

Mr. Knight was a member of the commission for the advancement of the fine arts, and was a constant attendant at the anniversary meetings of several of the metropolitan societies connected with literature and art.

DECORATIONS, BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

The grand staircase has been decorated, under the direction of Mr. Grouner, and is now completed after the manner of the Italian masters. On the ceiling four fresco paintings, on gold ground, representing morning, evening, noon, and night, have been executed by Mr. G. Townsend. Wreaths of flowers, surrounding these frescos, are the work of Messrs. Murdoch and Denby. The imitations of marble, executed by Mr. Moxon, are admirable.

NEW ORDER OF ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE.

—The spire of Grace Church is like an alligator's tail sticking up out of a thimble, if there ever was such a thing.—New York Tribune.